

Moral Disengagement and Psychopathy: A Study on Offenders in Italian Jails

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This article investigates mechanisms of moral disengagement and psychopathy in offender detainees (sex offenders and non-sex offenders). In particular, this article investigates whether, in all offenders, moral disengagement and psychopathy are correlated, if there are any differences between sex offenders and non-sex offenders as to psychopathy, and if there are any differences between rapists and child molesters in regard to their levels of psychopathy. The results indicate that, in all offenders, levels of moral disengagement are associated with levels of psychopathy, while sex offenders are more selfish, more insensitive and less remorseful than non-sex offenders. It is also found that rapists display more antisocial behaviour problematic elements in their lifestyle than child molesters. As well as increasing the dedicated literature, studying the mechanisms and characteristics of offenders – and of sex offenders in particular – may be of considerable importance for the promotion of effective and targeted treatment strategies.

Key words: moral disengagement; psychopathy; sex offenders.

Introduction

The main reason why people avoid committing a crime is dependent upon their concept of morality; in fact, the negative value of the criminal act – i.e. the potential consequences one may be subject to and the damage caused to the victims – usually represent a deterrent for acting in a deviant and antisocial way (DeLisi et al., 2014).

Sex crimes, in particular, are very common (Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003; McDonald, 2012) and the consequences for victims have been well studied and documented, among which are physical and mental health issues, decreased job satisfaction, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung,

2008; Nielsen, Bjorkelo, Notelaers, & Einarsen, 2010; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007).

As to perpetrators of a sex crime and understanding the dynamics underlying their behaviour, it is necessary to refer to self-regulatory mechanisms of thoughts and actions derived from the evaluation of one's conduct and based on one's inner moral norms. Such norms work as inhibitors in the face of immoral conduct, preventing – through the emotions of guilt and shame – the activation of 'self-approval' strategies when norms are violated. However, there are some psychosocial strategies which make it possible to selectively disengage from moral self-regulation: these strategies are the

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mechanisms of ‘moral disengagement’ (Bandura, 1999).

Bandura (1986, 1991, 1999) first defined the concept of moral disengagement in a systematic way:

moral reasoning is translated into actions through self-regulatory mechanisms rooted in moral standards and self-sanctions by which moral agency is exercised. The moral self is thus embedded in a broader social-cognitive self-theory encompassing self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulative mechanisms. These self-referent processes provide the motivational as well as the cognitive regulators of moral conduct. (Bandura, 1999, p. 93)

Initially, Bandura (1986) realized that the mechanisms of moral disengagement related to sexual abuse can be found in the so-called ‘rape myths’ where they play the role of attributing the blame to the victim and the role of exonerating the offender from any responsibility. In spite of the recognition that moral disengagement plays an important role in the aetiology of deviant sexual behaviours, there are hardly any theoretical and empirical applications in the field of sex crimes. A recent research study conducted by Petrucci et al. (2016) shows a difference between jailed subjects (non-sex and sex offenders) and controls: offenders generally display overall higher levels of moral disengagement. In particular, sex offenders seem to make more use of moral-disengagement mechanisms than non-sex offenders.

Carroll (2009) investigated this issue by studying male college subjects. She found that moral disengagement and moral judgement are strictly related to attitudes supporting rape, with higher levels of moral disengagement, more evidence of attitudes supporting the offence and a lower level of moral judgement being found in individuals who belong to a fraternity. However, in line with previous research (Fontaine, Fida, Paciello, Tisak, & Caprara, 2014; Hyde, Shaw, & Moilanen, 2010; Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Lupinetti, & Caprara, 2008;

Shulman et al., 2011), the study conducted by DeLisi et al. (2014) highlights that moral disengagement, together with psychopathy, has a relevant role in committing criminal behaviours.

Psychopathy is characterized by a set of interpersonal, emotional, lifestyle and behavioural features displayed through a wide range of antisocial behaviours (Cleckley, 1941; DeLisi, 2009; Hare & Neumann, 2008; Ribeiro da Silva, Rijo, & Salekin, 2012; Tuvblad, Bezdzjian, Raine, & Baker, 2013). From an interpersonal point of view, psychopaths are characterized by superficiality, narcissism, a grandiose sense of self, pathological lying and manipulation. From an emotional point of view, psychopaths are callous, lack compassion, do not take any responsibility for their actions, and show both emotional shallowness and a lack of guilt. With regard to their lifestyles, they lack realistic long-term objectives and are parasitic, irresponsible, impulsive and characterized by the continuous need for new stimuli (DeLisi et al., 2014).

As for behaviour, they show poor conduct control, early behavioural problems, juvenile delinquency, and criminal versatility. When a psychopath is charged with a crime, he or she is inclined to declare himself of herself innocent and not to show feelings of shame. Thus, it is clear that emotional inability can be related to moral disengagement as it prevents the establishment of an empathic relationship with the other, while an emotional link is needed in order to feel emotions of self-consciousness like guilt and shame (DeLisi et al., 2014).

Available data on psychopathy incidence suggest that its incidence is 1% in a normal population, while it rises to 3.5% among individuals working in the financial field; as for criminal populations, the percentages are 15 to 20% in the United States and 5 to 9% in Europe. It must be underlined that sex offenders represent 5 to 29% of the whole criminal population (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Hare, 2003).

Both psychopaths and sex offenders have in common a strong lack of empathy but, on the other hand, this does not signify that all sex criminals have a psychopathic personality; as a matter of fact, they can be affected by psychological or psychiatric disorders or they can be the outcome of cultural and social attitudes (Barnett & Mann, 2013; Hare, 2009). A lack of empathy is strongly connected to both difficulties in recognizing and working through one's emotions and difficulties in using language for expressing emotions. This could explain the inappropriate links a psychopath makes between feelings of love and sexual excitement, sadness and frustration, rage and irritability (Caretti & Craparo, 2010; Stevens, Charman, & Blair, 2001).

A research study conducted in Italy examined a group of 30 criminals who had committed mafia crimes and compared them to 39 criminals unconnected to mafia groups (Schimmenti, Caprì, La Barbera, & Caretti, 2014). In this study, psychopathy was not found in subjects belonging to mafia groups; this finding is linked to the fact that a psychopathic individual is unable to create any bonds or follow rules different from his or her own, since he or she experiences rules as an obstacle to manipulating and exploiting other people.

The inability to respect both laws and social rules is striking among psychopaths, who, in fact, show more variable and frequent antisocial behaviour than any other type of criminal (Hare, 2009). Psychopaths tend to commit different types of crimes, without any preference; this 'criminal versatility' (Hare, 2003) clashes with the distinguishing characteristic of sex offenders, as the latter tend to specialize – that is, they tend to commit the same type of crimes, perpetrating a so-called 'specific' recidivism (Hanson, Scott, & Steffy, 1995; Langan, Schmitt, & Durose, 2003; Sample & Bray, 2003).

The emotional inability of psychopaths is strictly connected to moral disengagement, because it prevents psychopaths from establishing social bonds with other people; an

emotional connection is what allows a person to experience negative feelings or feelings of self-consciousness, like shame or guilt. Although people who are not psychopaths are characterized by moral disengagement mechanisms too, the main deficits of psychopaths relate to disengagement, empathy, and emotional links with other people.

Moral disengagement mechanisms in sex offenders involve processes for behaviour redefinition, that is mechanisms twisting the cause–effect relationship and processes that modify the way in which the victim is perceived and considered. Moral disengagement implies a cognitive transformation of the deviant behaviour into a correct one, possibly worthy of justification through an advantageous comparison. The cognitive transformation of bad conduct may also be caused by a missed admission of one's own responsibility (displacement of responsibility and diffusion of responsibility). Self-justification of one's own behaviour may come from the attribution of blame to the victim as well as to victim dehumanization. Changes in behaviour take place by degrees, so some actions that were initially considered as despicable become gradually more acceptable and are thus performed without causing any particular stress to the individual. Consequently, treatments to prevent repeat offending in sex offenders can be based on deconstructing the cognitive processes involved in offending (Gulotta & Curci, 2010).

Some studies have showed links between antisocial behaviour, moral disengagement and psychopathic personality characteristics, with psychopathy scores being positively related to moral disengagement (Mathesius & Lussier, 2014; O'Kane, Fawcett, & Blackburn, 1996; Shulman, Cauffman, Piquero, & Fagan, 2011). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that young people with a psychopathic personality are characterized by impulsiveness, narcissism, callousness, lack of remorse and emotional indifference; they are involved not only in antisocial behaviours, but they also commit more serious crimes of

interpersonal violence (Vaughn & DeLisi, 2008; Vaughn, Howard, & DeLisi, 2008).

A recent study by Shulman, Cauffman, Piquero, and Fagan (2011) shows a strong correlation between callousness and indifference traits and moral disengagement, together with a moderately significant correlation between such traits and criminal acts. In line with what has been previously stated, it is clear that moral disengagement, criminal conduct and psychopathic characteristics show a very complex interplay (DeLisi et al., 2014).

Mathesius and Lussier (2014) investigated and compared the covariates of actual and official onset of sex offending in order to determine who the early onset sex offender really is and whether an offender profile may differ depending on the type of measure utilized. Their findings revealed a profile of the early official onset offender in line with the typical negative profile description of the early onset general (e.g. Farrington 2003; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993) and sexual (e.g. Cale & Lussier, 2011; Knight, Ronis, & Zakireh, 2009; Prentky & Knight, 1993) offender. Another important aspect in understanding sex offenders and their personalities is their criminal careers. Criminal career concepts such as criminal versatility and crime specialization, which are pivotal to specific policies targeting sex offenders and sex offending, have been limited in the field of sexual violence and abuse; however, research clearly shows (e.g. Lussier, 2005) that there are wide variations in crime specialization among types of sex offenders (Lussier & Beauregard, 2014). Lussier and Blokland (2014), for instance, examined the criminal careers of juvenile and adult sex offenders in a birth cohort and found a high level of discontinuity between the juveniles and adults. Their investigation found that most juvenile sex offenders do not go on to repeat their offences in adulthood, and also that most adult sex offenders did not commit any offences as a juvenile. The same conclusion applies for sexual recidivists. Therefore, for the authors, juvenile and adult sex offenders are two distinct groups.

Cale, Lussier, McCuish, and Corrado (2015) show a connection between the presence of psychopathic traits and sex offending; in particular, juvenile sex offenders presented with more evidence of psychopathy symptoms – not because they are more antisocial but because their interpersonal and emotional/affective functioning is more in line with the construct of psychopathy. In another recent study, Young, Koenigs, Kruepke, and Newman (2012) examined 20 psychopathic and 25 non-psychopathic criminals using tasks based on moral judgement; in these tasks, every participant was asked to evaluate some types of inflicted damage, whether accidental, deliberate or attempted and some neutral acts, and psychopathic offenders showed an emotional deficit in assessing the harm caused to victims (Gao & Tang, 2013; Young et al., 2012).

Furthermore, psychopathy is one of the most relevant predictors for recidivism, whether violent or not (Douglas, Vincent, & Edens, 2006; Hare & Neumann, 2008). Offenders with psychopathic characteristics commit a larger number of different crimes and show higher levels of violence in committing offences (Porter, Birt, & Boer, 2001; Porter, Woodworth, Earle, Drugge, & Boer, 2003). Because of the relationship between psychopathy and violence, a psychopathic personality could be linked to an inclination to commit sex crimes (Porter & Woodworth, 2007). Indeed, a study on sexual abusers has established that psychopathic sex offenders are more inclined to commit both rape and child abuse and reveal an adaptable assault pattern, regardless of the victim being an adult or a child, along with the way in which they act in an opportunistic manner depending upon their level of arousal (Porter, Fairweather, Drugge, Birt, Hervé, & Boer, 2000). In a further study, Porter, ten Brinke, and Wilson (2009) – in line with the results of other research (Olver & Wong, 2006) – suggest that psychopathy and deviant sexual interests can predict recidivism risk in different ways, once imprisonment is over. In

particular, Olver and Wong (2006) highlight that psychopathy mainly predicts generic (non-sexual) recidivism, at the same time underlining a negative association between deviant sexual interests and non-sexual crimes.

The Current Study

This study presents exploratory research conducted on a convenience sample as a replication attempt of psychopathy and moral disengagement studies of sex and non-sex offenders in an Italian context.

A correlation between moral disengagement and psychopathy was hypothesized (DeLisi et al., 2014; Fontaine et al., 2014; Hyde et al., 2010; Paciello et al., 2008; Shulman et al., 2011). It was also hypothesized that the mechanisms of moral disengagement of guilt attribution and displacement and diffusion of responsibility would be more present in the participants who have higher psychopathy scores (DeLisi et al., 2014).

A sex offender's deviant sexual frame of mind is characterized by (Gulotta & Curci, 2010):

- a specific view of himself, of the sexual act and of the victim;
- a strong egocentric self-awareness;
- the perception of the sexual act as a useful means for his own satisfaction; and
- the identification of a predestined victim who has to be hurt.

It was also believed important to identify whether there are any common personality characteristics in sex offenders and how these differ in non-sex offenders. It was hypothesized that, in line with the findings of other Porter and Woodworth (2007), sex offenders would score higher for factors in the Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003), and that within the sex offender group, rapists and child molesters would show no

significant differences for scores on the PCL-R (Porter et al., 2000).

Instruments

Two tools were used to test the above hypotheses: the Moral Disengagement Scale (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Vicino, & Bandura, 1996) and the Italian adaptation of the PCL-R (Caretti, Manzi, Schimmenti, & Seragusa, 2011). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha of the Moral Disengagement Scale is equal to .81.

The scale by Caprara et al. (1996) measures the cognitive mechanisms of moral disengagement and is made of eight subscales assessing the eight mechanisms identified by Bandura (1986):

- Moral justification allows one to explain the action using values higher than the committed transgression, so that the transgression is integrated into the psychic economy;
- Advantageous comparison by which the committed action is compared to a more negative one;
- Euphemistic labelling, where the act relevance is reduced by using jargon terms;
- Displacement of responsibility by which the link between the action and its consequences is distorted or cancelled, so that perpetrator involvement in the fact is diminished;
- Diffusion of responsibility through which the responsibility for the action is generalized to a specific group or the whole society;
- Disregard or distortion of consequences prevents one from becoming aware of the damage caused; as a consequence, the relevance of the misbehaviours is reduced accordingly and the behaviour becomes acceptable and justifiable;
- Dehumanization of the victims allows a lessening of one's responsibility by attributing some despicable characteristics to

the victims, thus depriving them of their dignity;

- Attribution of blame to the victim, when the latter is given blame for crime suffered; the transgressive behaviour is considered a defensive act that relieves the offender of his or her own responsibility.

The PCL-R (Caretti et al., 2011) is a semi-structured interview consisting of 20 items that are divided into four components and merged into two factors:

Factor 1, Interpersonal/Emotional, describes the interpersonal and affective traits concerning social interaction and examines the selfish, callous and remorseless use of other people. It is made up of two components: *Interpersonal* (Component 1) and *Emotional* (Component 2).

Factor 2, Social deviance, examines the unstable and antisocial way of life, mainly in terms of impulsiveness, irresponsibility, lack of scruples, and measures aspects linked to criminal behaviour. It is made up of two components: *Way of life* (Component 3) and *Anti-social* (Component 4).

Every item is assigned a score of 0, 1 or 2. Once the scoring procedure is completed, a total score is assigned to the individual, together with scores for the main factors and their components. The total score can range from 0 to 40.

These parameters permit a more accurate identification of the areas where the individual shows his or her typical psychopathy characteristics, enabling a clear understanding of the case (Table 1). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha of the PCL-R is equal to .80. Table 2 displays a descriptive analysis of PCL-R factors and components, differentiated by type of offence and type of victim.

Procedure

After having received permission from the Department of Penitentiary Administration

Table 1. Structure of the PCL-R.

Factor 1 (Components 1 and 2)				Factor 2 (Components 3 and 4)			
C1. Interpersonal		C2. Emotional		C3. Way of life		C4. Antisocial	
1. Glibness/superficial charm	6. Lack of remorse or guilt	3. Need for stimulation	10. Poor behavioural controls	9. Parasitic lifestyle	12. Early behaviour problems		
2. Grandiose sense of self-worth	7. Shallow affect	13. Lack of realistic goals	18. Juvenile delinquency	13. Lack of realistic goals	19. Revocation of conditional release		
4. Pathological lying	8. Callous/lack of empathy	14. Impulsivity	20. Criminal versatility	14. Impulsivity			
5. Conning/manipulative	16. Failure to accept responsibility	15. Irresponsibility		15. Irresponsibility			

Note: Items 11 (Promiscuous sexual behaviour) and 17 (Many short-term relationships) are not included because they are independent items, but they are included in the scoring.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of PCL-R factors and components by type of offense and type of victim.

	Type of Offense	
	Sexual, <i>M (SD)</i>	Non-Sexual, <i>M (SD)</i>
Factor 1: Interpersonal/Emotional	7.45 (3.45)	5.99 (3.26)
Factor 2: Social deviance	6.94 (4.80)	6.71 (4.22)
Interpersonal (Component 1)	2.98 (1.99)	2.64 (1.42)
Emotional (Component 2)	4.46 (2.28)	3.33 (2.20)
Way of life (Component 3)	3.83 (2.68)	4.00 (2.43)
Antisocial (Component 4)	3.05 (2.66)	2.56 (2.68)

	Type of Victim	
	Adult, <i>M (SD)</i>	Child, <i>M (SD)</i>
Factor 1: Interpersonal/Emotional	6.95 (3.04)	8.45 (3.75)
Factor 2: Social deviance	8.10 (4.93)	5.15 (4.23)
Interpersonal (Component 1)	2.69 (1.83)	3.45 (2.21)
Emotional (Component 2)	4.24 (2.17)	5.00 (2.25)
Way of life (Component 3)	4.30 (2.83)	3.00 (2.25)
Antisocial (Component 4)	3.71 (2.62)	2.15 (2.56)

(DPA), the penitentiary heads were contacted, followed by the educational sector of the penitentiary in order to identify detainees who could be asked to participate in the study.

The study was first presented to a group of detainees belonging to the so-called 'protected section' and secondly to a group of ordinary detainees. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that it is totally anonymous. After the detainees accepted, they signed an informed consent form in order to guarantee their privacy and the anonymity of their personal information.

Next, a number of individual interviews were conducted with every participant. During these interviews, a grid for anamnestic data was completed in order to obtain descriptive information about the sample (De Leo, Petruccelli, & Pedata, 2004). Both tools were submitted to every participant in an individual session.

All procedures which involved human participants were performed in accordance

with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Participants

The present study was performed on 50 male sex offenders (63%) and 29 male non-sex offenders (37%) recruited from penal institutes at Velletri, Enna, Pesaro and Frosinone (Italy). The sex offenders are divided into rapists ($n = 29$) and child molesters ($n = 20$).¹

With regard to the crime committed, 13.9% of offenses were committed against property, 20.3% were committed against persons, 63.3% were sex abuse offences, 1.3% were committed against personal property, and 1.3% did not declare the nature of their crime.

With regard to education, 57% of the sample have a junior secondary school certificate, 17.7% have an elementary school certificate, 12.7% have a high school certificate,

5.1% have no school certificate at all, 2.5% of the sample have a tertiary degree, 1.3% have completed three years in high school, and 3.8% of participants did not declare their qualifications.

Results

Relationship between Psychopathy and Moral Disengagement Mechanisms in All Offenders

The results of this study show a significant correlation between psychopathy and moral disengagement ($r = .37, p = .01$). Specifically, the moral disengagement mechanisms which are positively correlated with psychopathy are attribution of blame ($r = .38, p = .01$), advantageous comparison ($r = .29, p = .01$) and displacement of responsibility ($r = .33, p = .01$).

PCL-R Component 1 (Interpersonal) is positively correlated with overall moral disengagement within participants ($r = .29, p = .01$) as well as with advantageous comparison ($r = .29, p = .01$) and attribution of blame ($r = .31, p = .01$).

PCL-R Component 3 (Lifestyle), besides being positively correlated with overall moral disengagement ($r = .39, p = .01$), is also positively correlated with attribution of blame ($r = .37, p = .01$). Finally, PCL-R Factor 1 (Interpersonal/Emotional) is positively correlated with blame attribution ($r = .29, p = .01$).

Psychopathy: Differences between Sex Offenders and Non-Sex Offenders

The *t*-test for independent groups performed in order to verify possible differences in factors and components of the PCL-R for sex and non-sex offenders shows a statistically significant difference for Component 2 (Emotional), $t(75) = 2.10, p = .04$. The sex offenders in this sample are more emotionally detached and callous compared with non-sex offenders ($M = 7.45$ and $SD = 3.44$ for sex offenders, $M = 5.99$ and $SD = 3.26$ for non-

sex offenders). For the other PCL-R factors and components the differences between sex and non-sex offenders are not significant.

Psychopathy: Differences between Rapists and Child Molesters

The *t*-test for independent groups performed in order to verify if there are any differences in PCL-R factors and components between rapists and child molesters shows a statistically significant difference for the Social Deviance factor, $t(47) = 2.18, p = .034$, as well for Component 4 (Antisocial), $t(47) = 2.06, p = .045$. In general, the rapists in this sample are generally more prone to socially deviant behaviours compared with child molesters ($M = 8.10$ and $SD = 4.92$ for rapists, $M = 5.15$ and $SD = 4.20$ for child molesters). In detail, rapists seem to present more antisocial behaviour than child molesters ($M = 3.71$ and $SD = 2.62$ for rapists, $M = 2.15$ and $SD = 2.56$ for child molesters). In the other PCL-R factors and components, the differences between rapists and child molesters are not significant.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study aims to investigate whether there is a connection between moral disengagement and psychopathy within the sample under study; to verify if mechanisms of moral disengagement such as attribution of blame, diffusion of responsibility and displacement of responsibility are more present in subjects showing higher psychopathy scores; to investigate the difference between the scores obtained by sex offenders and non-sex offenders on a scale measuring psychopathy; and to discover if, within the sex offender group, there are significant differences between the scores obtained by rapists and child molesters.

A positive correlation was found between psychopathy and overall moral disengagement, thus confirming previous findings (DeLisi et al., 2014; Fontaine et al., 2014; Hyde et al., 2010; Paciello et al., 2008; Shulman et al.,

2011). In other words, high levels of moral disengagement mechanisms are associated with high levels of psychopathy in criminal subjects. This result suggests the need for a specific treatment for psychopathic offenders exhibiting significant moral disengagement. Based on the literature, it seems that cognitive-behavioural treatment is efficacious for such offenders (Hughes et al., 1997). Despite this, many authors consider it more appropriate to speak of management rather than of treatment for psychopathic offenders (Patrick, 2005).

A statistically-significant correlation emerged in particular for those mechanisms regarding individual responsibility, such as attribution of blame, advantageous comparison and displacement of responsibility. No significant correlations were found between psychopathy and diffusion of responsibility and dehumanization of the victim. Furthermore, the sex offenders showed higher scores on the interpersonal and emotional domains of the psychopathy scale; this means that sex offenders present stronger selfish feelings, more callousness and less remorse compared with non-sex offenders.

When examining the sex offender group, it was found that, differently from what is described in the literature, rapists show greater problems in domains concerning lifestyle and antisocial behaviour compared with child molesters. In a study (Porter et al., 2000) has been shown that the rapists and mixed rapist/molesters were more psychopathic (all scored higher on the PCL-R) than child molesters (offenders who had victimized children exclusively).

This study has some limitations, the primary one of which is the difficulty in sourcing participants. In fact, a convenience sample is used and thus the results cannot be generalized to all detainees. A second limitation is connected to social desirability, especially in individuals who have committed crimes, including sexual ones. In other words, participants might have presented themselves in this study in an idealized way and therefore they may want to be seen as conforming more to social norms than they actually do. Future

studies could expand research in this field, including female criminals, thus investigating possible gender differences in order to obtain more generalizable results. It might also be possible to use ad hoc developed implicit tools in order to collect information unbiased by social desirability as much as possible.

Despite its limitations, this study represents an important contribution since it highlights specific aspects of sex offenders. The specific mechanisms of moral disengagement which allow the sex offender to 'rationalize' the assault committed and the critical aspects which have emerged from the PCL-R mainly concerning the child molester participants might allow better targeted planning of ad hoc treatments.

Finally, in Italy at least, there is a need to increase some kinds of treatments that are specifically tailored to these particular types of offenders and which have a dual purpose: to prevent repeat offending, thus protecting society in general, and to facilitate the re-entry of offenders into society (Porter, Brinke & Wilson, 2009; Olver & Wong, 2006). In order to achieve the latter aim, sex offenders should be looked after and treated appropriately, not only during their detention, but also via an efficient network system after their release.

Note

1. One sex offender is not included in the above split because information as to the age of his victim was not obtained (it is unknown whether the victim was an adult or a child).

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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